INTELLIGENCE MONOGRAPH

INTEGRATED COMMUNITY PRODUCTION OF NATIONAL CURRENT INTELLIGENCE--THE PROS AND CONS

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF INTELLIGENCE

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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PREFACE

Among the many ideas to have emerged from the Intelligence Community's review of its organizational posture during recent years is the concept of establishing a truly integrated center for the production of national current intelligence. The center would bring under one roof personnel from the various NFIB agencies, drawing upon their combined knowledge and background to give policymakers as well rounded and balanced a view of what is happening in the world as is possible. This study was commissioned with a view toward finding out in a very general way what producers thought of the idea and of flagging the major problems that would be encountered in establishing such a center.

We found general agreement that in the abstract the concept was not a bad one, but that in practice it would be very difficult to implement.* The major problem areas are in personnel and costs. The quality personnel needed to make such a center work simply cannot be spared, and even if they were available, it would be very difficult to induce them to disrupt their present careers by accepting temporary assignments to a national current intelligence center. On the matter of money, we found that even if the center were colocated with existing intelligence support facilities, there would be added costs. And if the center were set up at a separate location downtown,

*The specific conclusions and recommendations of this study are contained on the last page.

and nearer to the policy-making process, where it would function the best, there would be major additional expenses.

Since the study was commissioned last summer, the Intelligence Community has taken other steps to improve its intelligence analysis posture--most notably the recent reorganization of CIA's Directorate of Intelligence. These changes would seem to argue further against the need at this time of so drastic an innovation as the establishment of a national center for current intelligence.

Still, circumstances might arise in the future--a major overhaul of the foreign intelligence establishment, for example--in which the idea of a national current intelligence center might be worth a closer look. Against that contingency and because the issues discussed in the text are of relevance in any consideration of the reorganization or centralization of any of the Intelligence Community's production assets, we believe that the paper is worth the perusal of those charged with the Community's management or interested in the shape of its future.*

*The author of this study was [redacted] of the DDI, who has extensive experience as an analyst and as a manager of analytic production. He directed the effort over a two-year period to produce the Community-sponsored National Intelligence Bulletin, as a premier current intelligence publication. The study was undertaken at the request of [redacted], formerly Director of the Office of Current Intelligence, CIA.

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INTRODUCTION

In the running debate that has attended the evolution of the US foreign intelligence structure, a recurrent issue has been that of how to organize the production of finished intelligence for the national security policy community. Should current intelligence summaries and memoranda, research reports, estimates, and other finished intelligence products prepared for the "national" level audience be centrally produced, with due provision for coordination and the expression of dissent, or should many flowers be allowed to bloom? Would the President and other members of the National Security Council be better served if the Intelligence Community pronounced itself with one voice on major foreign intelligence issues, or would they profit more from receiving a variety of interpretations of identical events and trends from "competing centers of analysis" situated in departments and agencies whose angles of vision differed, not only because of varying bureaucratic interests, but also because of differing institutional cultures and different kinds of people doing the analysis?

Putting aside the relative intrinsic merits of these two opposing modes of service to the policymakers, what about costs? Wouldn't a centralized system, by eliminating duplication of effort, result in major savings in personnel and production costs? Or would the additional costs of having intelligence produced in a number of places be justified by

the more rounded picture policymakers might gain of the world and by the insurance such a system might offer against the danger of their becoming victims of institutional bias stemming either from a particularistic world view or from bureaucratic axe-grinding, or from both?

This issue of course has never been definitively resolved and is never likely to be. In the real world of national security affairs and supporting intelligence activities, what has evolved over the years is a kind of "mixed economy" in which some of the intelligence support has approached the ideal of centralized intelligence analysis and production that was a major rationale for creation of the Central Intelligence Agency in 1947, while departments and agencies at the same time have made unilateral intelligence inputs into the formulation of national security policy. The mix of these two kinds of intelligence support has varied somewhat according to the work habits and personalities of successive presidents and their entourages, but this dualism (perhaps "polycentrism" would be a better word) has always been a characteristic of the Intelligence Community and probably will continue to be.

President Ford, in his Executive Order 11905 of 18 February 1976, gave the CIA, acting as the Director of Central Intelligence's executive agent, a clear mandate to produce "national"*

*"National" intelligence is an elusive notion that has received a variety of interpretations. For this paper we define intelligence as national if it is a coordinated product of the Intelligence Community and if its subject matter is of sufficient importance to engage the attention of the President or at least of his principal national security advisors.

intelligence, including a "current intelligence publication." At the same time, the Executive Order clearly recognized the right of, and the need for, the constituent agencies and offices of the Intelligence Community other than CIA to produce departmental intelligence. Such intelligence is essential for officials such as the Secretaries of State, Defense, and Treasury to carry out their respective missions. It also is a valuable tool in the continuing competition for access to the President. So long as their authority to produce departmental intelligence is unaffected, and so long as they can coordinate substantively CIA's output, other elements in the Intelligence Community appear content to allow the Agency to take the lead in producing national intelligence.

But in theory at least there may be better ways to produce national intelligence. One such way might be the creation of a truly integrated center for the production of current intelligence for national level consumers.* Such an entity could be integrated in two senses:

- --it would be staffed by personnel from various agencies, departments, and services sitting on the National Foreign Intelligence Board;
- --it would be "multidisciplinary" in the sense that it would be manned by personnel with sufficient expertness in such varying disciplines as political science, economics, military doctrine and practice, and science and technology to permit the center to bring all needed skills to bear in developing its product.

*For ease of identification, we shall refer to this entity as the National Center for Current Intelligence (NCCI) throughout the balance of this paper.

In the abstract, the concept of an NCCI would appear to have a number of attractions. For example:

--current reporting and analysis would be enriched by the examination in one central place of substantive issues from several different angles of vision--both in terms of divergent departmental views and in terms of differing disciplinary standpoints;

--assuming that an NCCI came up with art forms with broad enough appeal and utility to bridge the varying needs of departmental consumers, the participating agencies might be relieved of at least some of the current intelligence load in their respective shops;

--although there doubtless would be severe culture shock at first, personnel of the participating agencies might gradually develop the habit of working together, freer from the frictions and jealousies that seriously detracted from their collaborative effort in production of the late National Intelligence Bulletin, a recent experiment in the direction of a joint national current intelligence product.

In our interviews with producers in the Intelligence Community, we found general agreement that the NCCI concept is a good one in theory, but many reservations concerning serious practical obstacles that would stand in the way of its successful implementation. There was indeed considerable skepticism whether, in the real world of competing bureaucracies, differing office cultures, growing personnel constraints, and even divergent views about what current intelligence itself is all about, creation of an NCCI would be feasible--at least under present circumstances.

Thus, we may really be dealing with an idea whose time has not yet come; nevertheless, the examination of the prospects

and problems, tradeoffs and techniques that would be involved in its implementation presents an opportunity to study the interplay of many of the seemingly eternal and intractable issues that face the Intelligence Community today and that would loom large in any major effort to shift the production resources of the Community around, either toward centralization or to differing physical locations. Among the issues illustrated in the NCCI concept are:

--whether centralization of effort really does reduce costs and enhance quality of the product;

--can a useful degree of Community coordination of the intelligence product actually be carried out on a routine basis;

--what are the real prospects for inter-Agency personnel rotation;

--what is the proper relationship between a research base and current intelligence;

--what is the proper scope of the current intelligence effort? Is it essentially reportorial or does it necessarily involve a good measure of analysis;

--what are the tradeoffs in creating a Community analytical function in a centralized location, physically divorced from one or another of the contributing agencies?

For these reasons, it seemed worthwhile to follow through with our study in the hope that it might provide some insights and guidance to those concerned with the many areas of intelligence today that a host of dedicated people are attempting to sharpen and improve.

Under our original concept, we envisaged an NCCI of about the size of CIA's Office of Current Intelligence and with

essentially the same mission. Subsequently, we were asked to examine as another option the establishment of a much smaller NCCI whose role would be restricted largely to the final drafting and processing of material for daily and perhaps weekly summaries at the national level. In the ensuing study we consider both types.

WHAT IS CURRENT INTELLIGENCE?

Before undertaking a detailed examination of the NCCI concept, one must first attempt to reach a definition of "current intelligence." Views on this concept vary around town and even within different elements of single agencies. To some, "current intelligence" involves merely a briefing function, in which the major cables of the day are summarized, either orally or in written form, for principals too busy to sift through the traffic themselves. Others would take the process a bit further, embellishing the raw traffic at least to the extent of putting the information in a factual context so that the busy consumer can know immediately who the players are and what the game is. For still others--and this is the philosophy that increasingly guided the now defunct Office of Current Intelligence's production of "current intelligence" over the years--it involved not only the first two steps, but also the embedding of the information received in an analytic context, even though judgments were necessarily tentative because of short deadlines.

Under this philosophy, analysts consider it their duty to tell consumers why we are taking up their time with a particular subject, to show why they think this particular information is important, and to give their best, however tentative, judgment as to what the material being treated portends for the future. The particular art form chosen to convey the message is a matter of relatively less importance than the quality of analysis that is brought to bear on the subject.

Now it is obvious that these distinctions tend to get lost in the every day world of producing "current intelligence." Often "current intelligence" according to either the first or the second definition will suffice. This is especially the case when ongoing crisis situations are being covered. But proponents of a broad definition of "current intelligence" argue that more often than not a fuller, more analytical treatment of the subject at hand is necessary.

A view that has gained increasing currency is that "current intelligence" has become the tail that is wagging the Intelligence Community dog, that only by streamlining the way we produce "current intelligence" can analysts be freed to concentrate more fully on "analysis." This is part of the rationale behind the Directorate of Intelligence's recent decision to split off a relatively small group of analysts, writers, and editors from the research and analysis offices to concentrate solely on the production of "current intelligence."

If an NCCI were to be set up under this narrow philosophy of current intelligence production, it would obviously be a small shop of between 25 and 50 persons and clearly would be easier to bring off than a larger aggregation. To this writer, however, an entity of this nature would come closer to fitting the definition of an operations center or a watch office than a current intelligence shop. To be anything more, an NCCI of this size would almost certainly need to have ready access to, and intimate association with, the extensive analytical, informational, and research resources represented, for example, by the research offices of the Directorate of Intelligence, including the Office of Regional and Political Analysis now being organized out of elements of OCI and the Office of Political Research. The "economy-sized" NCCI would inevitably have to turn to the experts for advice and comment on the subject matter it was processing. It probably would soon become necessary in many cases to call on the analysts in the research shops to do the initial drafting. Thus, it would seem to this writer that a small-sized NCCI could work only if it were colocated with larger analytic and research entities at CIA, the Pentagon, or State. As will be seen later on, colocation raises problems of a different nature which would complicate establishment of an NCCI.

One possible variation on the idea of a small NCCI (in fact one suggested during our interviews) would be to make an

NCCI of this size an integrated editorial shop, selecting from drafts submitted by the respective agencies for inclusion in the daily intelligence summary. This would permit broader and more meaningful coverage than a mere cable gisting operation, but it would also suffer from the same disabilities that afflicted the NIB experiment.

In that instructive but by no means entirely successful endeavor, the editors were confronted with inter-agency competition for space and pride of place in the NIB; on occasion there were even competing drafts on the same subject. The result, not unnaturally, was not the hoped for fusion of talent and viewpoint, but rather a good deal of acrimony and bureaucratic bad feeling. The other agencies, because CIA, through the agency of OCI, in effect called the shots, thought they were being unfairly treated. The disproportionate representation of the work of CIA in the pages of the NIB was the product of a number of factors, probably the least of which was the operation of a conscious bias on the part of the CIA editors. Nonetheless, despite numerous attempts, it was impossible to shake DIA and NSA analysts from their firmly held conviction that they were closed out of the NIB's pages because of the editors' favoritism toward CIA drafts.

POSSIBLE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH AN NCCI MIGHT BE ESTABLISHED

As we have already indicated, the problems involved in the establishment of an NCCI and the cost/benefits ratio would

vary according to where it was established and under whose auspices. The easiest and bureaucratically the least disruptive way would be to establish it at Langley, transforming the recently organized Current Reporting Group (CRG) into an interagency body but leaving it under the management of the Deputy Director for Intelligence.

Among the advantages of this approach:

--we would be building on the CRG's long experience --as successor to OCI--in producing current intelligence at the national level and on a well established web of relationships and procedures for drawing on the resources of the rest of the Agency and the Community for inputs and support;

--because of existent production facilities and nearby operations center support, the costs of establishing an NCCI would be minimized;

--an NCCI under these circumstances could call on the extensive analytic base represented by the Directorate of Intelligence's research offices;

--the realignment of personnel could be undertaken at a pace sensitive to the problems the contributing agencies would inevitably encounter in participating in the venture.

Unfortunately, there is a major drawback to this approach. It has to do with the sensitive issue of how other agencies have come to view CIA--as distinct from the DCI--and its role in intelligence production. A recurrent theme in our interviews around town has been the argument that CIA has become just another department, just another intelligence shop vying with a variety of other ones.

More specifically, we encountered considerable resentment against the now abolished OCI, particularly on the part of the

DoD agencies. Although relationships at the analyst-to-analyst level were often reasonably good, personnel in the other agencies appeared to harbor a strong bias against OCI as an institution. This feeling was doubtless the product of a number of factors--not the least of which were the analysts' experiences with the NIB experiment. It would be extremely difficult to lure analysts to a rotational assignment at Langley to work for the "competition." For most of them, the renaming of that part of the CIA mechanism responsible for current reporting and transforming it into an NCCI would be a distinction without a difference.

In theory, and in many ways in practice, it would make better organizational sense to move an NCCI--whether a renamed CRG or a larger OCI-like entity with its own capability for producing current intelligence of all types--out from under the DDI and put it directly under the DCI.

--Even though CIA personnel--initially at least--would make up a relatively high percentage of an NCCI's personnel, it still would be flying under colors other than those of the CIA per se. Prospective members from other agencies clearly would prefer such an assignment to one in which they were working in an entity managed and controlled by "CIA";

--Under this arrangement, the advantages in terms of minimal costs of remaining at Langley could still be enjoyed;

--If it were assigned to the Deputy for National Intelligence, and this seems to us to be an NCCI's most logical home, the process of bringing production of all national intelligence under the aegis of one officer close to the DCI would have been completed;

--Should it ever be decided to separate the DCI from the Agency, an important element would already have been added to the staff he would need to take with him downtown to perform his remaining roles as the President's principal intelligence officer and as coordinator of the US foreign intelligence effort;

--Should a large-sized NCCI be developed, it could continue to do an important share of the drafting of estimates and other NIO-sponsored papers in a position bureaucratically closer to the NIO system than is presently the case with the core analytical offices of the DDI.

--The Directorate of Intelligence, freed from the nattering distraction of producing current intelligence, could concentrate its full time and resources on "in-depth" research and analysis. (The other side of this coin is, of course, that the research offices might tend to stagnate without the daily stimulus of crash requests from top-level consumers.)

If one were to take the process a step further and, while leaving an NCCI under the management of the Deputy for National Intelligence, move it nearer the White House, there would be the added attractions of locating it on "neutral turf," where it might be easier to lure quality personnel, and of putting it much closer to the policy action point. But under these circumstances, the costs would skyrocket.

--In this case, a small NCCI based on the CRG, wouldn't suffice for the reasons stated earlier. Personnel to staff a group of about the size of OCI, but leavened with practitioners of other disciplines would have to be found.

--Finding adequate quarters, with space in such short supply near the White House, would in itself be extremely difficult as well as expensive;

--The whole range of facilities and services related to the timely flow of cable traffic

and other intelligence information would have to be replicated. This would include the installation of expensive communication equipment, computers and the other equipment necessary to relate the NCCI to the Intelligence Community's ADP systems, and salaries for watch officers, couriers, and information control officers;

--Expensive word processing and printing equipment would have to be installed;

--An administrative and personnel support apparatus would need to be established.

Were we willing to pay the price, the environment in which analysts in an NCCI found themselves downtown might be preferable in some ways to that at Langley. Instead of being relatively isolated some miles up the Potomac, they would be within walking distance of State, the NSC Staff, and the White House and just across the river from the Pentagon. Under these conditions, analysts could get around easier, comparing notes with their counterparts on both the intelligence and policy sides. Their chances of finding out what was worrying policymakers would be enhanced as would be opportunities for getting feedback on the impact of their own efforts. Analysts would be less chained to the last cable they had read, able to supplement their consideration of intelligence problems with the oral input they would receive through person to person contacts. We have tended to become increasingly isolated from such stimulation at Langley. Intelligence officers who have served in positions where they have had close physical proximity to the policymakers generally agree that it is very advantageous for their professional output. This greater access to people in the

know would come, moreover, not only from closer physical proximity, but also from the analysts' strengthened credentials as members of a national intelligence center rather than as workers in the various departmental vineyards.

Still, there would be other costs in addition to the budgetary ones. The most important would be the analysts' displacement from the research bases of their parent agencies. Telephone calls and occasional meetings could hardly take the place of the kind of immersion in their subject matter, in the daily company of their fellow experts in the research shops, that they normally experience now. This would be especially true of economists and military analysts from CIA, not to mention the China watchers and the Sovietologists.

The difficulties and costs of establishing separate facilities for an NCCI would of course be attenuated if it were part of a general move in which the DCI, moving downtown himself as head of the Community, brought with him not only his NIOs but also the analytic and research offices of the Directorate of Intelligence, leaving at Langley only those analytic resources necessary to support CIA in its collection and covert action roles. We would then be in an entirely new ball game in which an NCCI would be established in the context of a major reshuffle of the Intelligence Community. In such a situation:

--The DCI would be in a much stronger position to demand qualified personnel from the several agencies;

--The costs of moving into new quarters and installing the necessary communication, ADP, and production equipment would be chargeable not only to the NCCI but also to the other new entities created to carry out intelligence research and analysis;

--Supported by a national intelligence operations center and with an extensive research and analysis base close at hand, the NCCI would be especially well placed to serve as the focus for crisis management on the intelligence side, except when the content of the crisis was predominantly military, in which case the responsibility could be switched to the Pentagon.

Circumstances such as those envisaged above are probably the ones in which an NCCI would be most likely to come into being. But even under the most propitious conditions, there are numerous problems and implications of the NCCI concept which would require careful study before actually trying to establish such a center. The most salient of these are discussed in broad outline below.

MAJOR ISSUES

To those unfamiliar with the complexities of intelligence production, a principal attraction of the NCCI concept might be the seeming lure of significant savings. The establishment of an integrated national current intelligence center would seem, on the face of it, to hold out the prospect of reducing "duplication," thereby saving production costs and freeing valuable personnel for other, perhaps more significant, duties in the field of intelligence.

Unfortunately, the fact of the matter is that, even under the most modest of the various possible schemes for an NCCI, few if any savings would be realized. If, for example, creation

of an NCCI in the context of an ongoing operation at Langley were all that was attempted, very little "duplication" would actually be eliminated, and personnel costs, rather than going down, might very well go up.

In the first place, the much touted "duplication" of effort in the Intelligence Community is more apparent than real. NSA doesn't produce finished current intelligence, and DIA of necessity assigns a low priority to participation in the process at the national level because of heavy involvement in departmental business. During our interviews, we were told that about 80 percent of all of the Department of Defense's intelligence effort (this would include the activities of DIA, ACSI, ONI, Air Force intelligence, etc.) is directed toward serving the unified and specified commands and subordinate units--in short, toward serving departmental, tactical needs.

To be sure, both DIA and INR produce their own versions of "current intelligence"--INR in its twice daily summaries for the Secretary and DIA in its Defense Intelligence Notes (DINS). The INR summaries, however, are tailored to meet the Secretary's particular needs, and although some of the DINS could probably be dropped if an NCCI came up with a satisfactory general purpose product, many of them treat subject matter of a technical or tactical military nature that would be unlikely to be covered in a national level daily publication.

The largest area of duplication in the current intelligence field probably is between CIA's output of features for the NID

and memoranda prepared especially for specific requesters and INR's series of Intelligence Briefs and Reports. But even if an NCCI were to take over this kind of Agency output, INR would almost certainly be tasked by the Department to continue to produce its own memoranda on the grounds that INR analysts would be more closely attuned to the special needs of their counterparts in the policy bureaus and that in any event the latter would not want to be in the position of having to depend solely on the output of an extradepartmental source for key intelligence judgments relevant to policy.

Indeed, however much the "gate keepers" for top consumers may be prone to complain routinely about the "paper blizzard," most of them are loath to reduce the flow of material for fear of "missing something" that might be of interest to their policy-making principals. One notable exception is in the area of crisis reporting, where because of time pressures and the vastly increased volume of traffic during these periods, there has been considerable sentiment for the production of a unified Community sitrep. This concept is in fact the subject of a recent DCID, and a few tentative steps have already been taken to establish regular procedures for the production of National Intelligence Situation Reports.

It might be argued that an NCCI would not result in additional personnel costs because all one would be doing would be rotating people within the Community, with CIA personnel, for example, replacing DIAers for the duration of

latter's assignments to an NCCI. The problem here is one of symmetry. It seems highly unlikely that in any rotational system the participating agencies could fit people to jobs in such a way that no agency suffered any degradation of its ability to carry out its departmental mission. There would also be the question of orienting people to their new environments, of breaking them in on jobs very different from ones they just left. In sum, there almost certainly would not be a one-for-one exchange; contributing departments would probably have to do at least some additional hiring to maintain efficiency levels.

As already discussed above, if an NCCI were to be set up downtown at a new installation, the costs would reach truly significant proportions. There may be valid arguments for establishing an NCCI, but the achievement of significant savings and the reduction of "duplication" are not among them.

The Issue of Colocation: The question of where to put an NCCI is a difficult one for which there is no easy answer. If it were colocated with entities already in being that had the requisite communication, production and other support facilities, costs would be kept to a minimum. There would also be what one might call the "serendipity factor." To the extent that such additional activities did not detract from its basic mission, the NCCI could give the host agency or department a bonus in the form of quick answers to ad hoc questions for which the office with which the NCCI might be colocated did not have the answers.

But there clearly would be drawbacks. We have already pointed to Langley's relative isolation and the psychological and bureaucratic factors arguing against locating an NCCI there.

The Pentagon is another option. One value of locating an NCCI in conjunction with the National Military Command Center complex, for example, would be to enhance the access of the current intelligence producers to vital military operational traffic which, at times of crisis, can be a key input to the national current intelligence product. But, during routine periods of intelligence coverage, this value would not obtain, and other questions would arise.

It is one thing to colocate the Strategic Warning Staff with DIA--strategic warning after all has to do with forecasting imminent major hostilities, which if they came would automatically leave the National Command Authority in full charge of intelligence support activities--and quite another to locate a shop there for the production of national current intelligence on all subjects at times when the US is not engaged in major war. Even if the NCCI were entirely separate from the National Military Command Center/National Military Indications Center complex, there is the strong possibility that, being so conveniently at hand, it would be caught up disadvantageously in the servicing of the heavy departmental demands imposed by the DoD and the JCS, the best intentions of everyone notwithstanding.

State is another candidate for colocation. On the surface this option has certain attractions. It would certainly be ideally located. The difficulty is, however, that under present conditions State has neither the space nor the communications

and other facilities necessary to support an NCCI. It is also questionable whether the "culture" at State, oriented as it is to diplomacy and not to intelligence, would be compatible with and hospitable to the establishment of the center for national current intelligence on its turf.

The best location for an NCCI--despite its much higher cost--clearly would be at some independent site downtown, with Langley running a very distant second.

Personnel--Getting Them and Managing Them: Arranging for a steady flow of high-quality personnel in and out of an NCCI and managing them while they are there would present perhaps the most challenging problems of all, should a decision be made to organize such a center. Among the more significant factors to be kept in mind are:

- --An NCCI would be competing with other constituents of the Intelligence Community for personnel whose numbers have remained about the same for the past several years but who every year face increasing demands on their analytical services. The world they are supposed to watch has become more complex, and the quantity of intelligence they must work with has increased enormously;

- --An NCCI would be drawing upon personnel from disparate career services with different philosophies of management. CIA and NSA, for instance, hire people for specific jobs for the long pull, while State and DoD rotate foreign service officers and military officers respectively in and out of their intelligence shops for comparatively short tours;

- --For these foreign service and military officers, a tour in intelligence is generally secondary in their overall career objectives. For the best of them (the kind an NCCI would want), an intelligence assignment is considered a detour in their progress toward high-level diplomatic posts or major commands;

- --Rotation of personnel would need to be arranged in a way that drew a balance between bringing in

new blood and maintaining adequate substantive and procedural continuity, not only in the NCCI, but also in the intelligence offices of the contributing agencies;

--FSO's in particular would probably be reluctant to serve out of fear that the "CIA" label would follow them to their next overseas post.

--Participating agencies almost certainly--and quite properly--would demand that positions of leadership be shared and rotated in the same way as analytical positions;

--Disparities in the experience and talent of personnel from the various agencies would require careful planning to avoid the danger of an NCCI being overloaded with personnel who might not be as suitable as ones from agencies with better qualified personnel for the jobs at hand.

--A number of practical issues would have to be resolved, such as who would write NCCI staffers' fitness reports and how would promotions be handled during their tours? Above all, the notion that to be on TDY is to be forgotten would have to be overcome if qualified people were to be attracted.

These problems, while difficult, are not insuperable. The National Photographic Interpretation Center, after all, has for some years been jointly managed and staffed by CIA and DIA. A more recent experimental venture, one which is perhaps more relevant to the kind of organization we are examining in this paper, is the Strategic Warning Staff. Its relevance stems essentially from two factors: it has an interagency staff, and it is colocated with the NMIC in the Pentagon. It is probably too early to draw any definitive conclusions about

the SWS experiment; one major problem that has already emerged is the difficulty of obtaining qualified personnel.

But the main point we have been trying to make in this subsection is that the personnel problems inherent in the NCCI concept are extraordinarily complex. Careful staff work and preparation would be necessary before any move actually to establish an NCCI was undertaken.

Coordination: Were an NCCI to be established, one would hope that its members would check their departmental hats at the door. They of course would come to the NCCI with viewpoints conditioned to a degree by the office cultures and the substantive/functional missions of their parent agencies. Indeed the fusion of varying standpoints and patterns of experience would be one of the principal values of an NCCI. But once in the NCCI, the concept is that they would work together as a team, producing current intelligence reflecting their combined wisdom and knowledge, not the departmental interests of their parent units.

Since an NCCI would be producing national intelligence, there would still be a requirement for institutional coordination of its product. This could be done in essentially the same way as the National Intelligence Daily is now coordinated. Drafts of all items could be submitted electronically to interested agencies for pre-publication coordination of substance but not of language and style. As in the case of the NID, procedures could--and should--be established for the registration of dissent.

Provision for a Built-in Multidisciplinary Capability: To do its job properly, an NCCI should have personnel available who collectively could examine foreign intelligence problems in all of their aspects--including political, economic, military, and scientific. These analysts would not need to be experts in depth in one of the subdisciplines of their specialities, but they would need to have a good knowledge of what their respective disciplines had to offer and where to go to obtain more expert advice if it is needed. Ideally, they also should be able to write an integrated intelligence piece giving political, economic, military, sociological, or psychological factors the relative weight the subject matter seems to warrant.

These personnel could be rotated in and out of the research and analysis offices. Both an NCCI and the research and analysis offices would benefit from these exchanges, the former for the reasons outlined briefly above and the latter because their analysts would benefit from the integrational effect of wider exposure to the multidisciplinary world, helping them to fit their particular pieces of knowledge into a larger whole and to learn, through the doing of it, how to think and write about--at least in a very general way--other areas of inquiry and analysis.

But, the catch is that it would be especially difficult to pry from their parent agencies people who are at the same time well versed in one discipline and flexible enough to work in others. If it were ever decided to try to implement the

NCCI concept even with its many complexities, it certainly would be worth making this additional effort.

Crisis Management: An NCCI (the large not the small variant) would make an ideal focus for crisis management under the terms of the recent DCID on the subject. It would already be fully integrated in terms both of representation from the several agencies and multidisciplinary capability, and if need be, it could be quickly built up with additional people with the skills appropriate to the crisis at hand. An NCCI would be in strong position to serve as the crisis center of the Intelligence Community. This would be especially true if it were located downtown.

Support of the NIO System: The new Office of Regional and Political Analysis (ORPA) created through merger of most of OCI and the Office of Political Research presumably will inherit OCI's workload in support of the NIOs. Since the NIO system was established in late 1973, OCI provided the major share of first drafts of political estimates and of other interagency papers with a predominately political content.

Once a going concern, an NCCI could probably do some of this work, particularly fast reaction papers such as interagency alert memoranda. Another possibility (if we let our imaginations take flight for the moment) would be the reestablishment of an estimates staff and its placement in a grouping under the Deputy for National Intelligence that also included the NIOs, an NCCI, and a national intelligence operations center.

Products: Based on his extensive experience on the production side of current intelligence for a number of years, it is this writer's opinion that consumers are far less concerned about how current intelligence is packaged than they are about receiving timely, thoughtful, well-written material on subjects pertinent to their particular policy concerns. Indeed, many would be hard put to remember whether a particular bit of intelligence that made an impact on them the day before was delivered in the NID, the Staff Notes, a DIN, the OCI Weekly, or in some other form. And if one could assemble ten consumers who were willing to express a preference, no one single product would receive a majority vote.

Selection of the right publications strategy is, however, of major importance to the producer. He must in the first place hit upon a mix of primary publications and spinoffs that will permit him, with the limited resources allotted to him, to serve a policy community which is becoming ever more variegated, both here and abroad. He must at the same time leave his analysts with sufficient time during their oftentimes long days to supplement the written with the spoken word in their transactions with their particular policy audiences, both in telephone conversations and in face-to-face encounters. And, finally, his analysts need time to absorb the raw traffic and to think about and talk over substantive matters with their colleagues.

The constellation of publications finally settled upon also has a major impact on how the office is organized, on what arrangements for production will have to be made and how much they will cost, on night and day scheduling, and on a host of other aspects of the office's operational culture.

It has often been argued, especially in recent years, that since the policy audience was so diffuse, it was virtually impossible to produce a general purpose publication that would bridge consumers' manifold interests enough to make it worthwhile. There is certain merit in this position, but a case can still be made for continuance of a daily publication, for a number of reasons, including:

--Policy makers at the highest level, including the President, need routinely to be kept abreast of major international developments and of important intelligence judgments. A crisply written and well edited general purpose daily can be quickly absorbed directly by these policy makers or can provide an important input to oral briefings if that is the preferred method of keeping up to speed;

--For officers in the policy community at lower echelons, the judgments of analysts on conditions and developments in countries for which the former have responsibility are of interest to them, even though they may have read the raw traffic and may actually, through informal modes of communication--or through highly sensitive cables with extremely limited dissemination--be informed in greater detail than the analysts themselves;

--The cable spinoff of the daily is of value to US diplomats and commanders abroad, who often lack access to much of the intelligence information available in Washington;

--A daily publication is useful to intelligence managers in helping them to monitor the

efficacy of the collection systems or other aspects of the intelligence process with which they are charged.

Were an NCCI to be formed, its production strategy would be influenced by its size and the organizational context in which it is placed. At a minimum it probably should produce a general purpose daily, augmented by spot reports somewhat akin to the White House Situation Room Reports now produced by the CRG. In conjunction with the operations center that supported it, an NCCI might also produce an essentially non-analytical overnight summary of major happenings and of the night's most significant intelligence take.

If an NCCI of about the same dimensions of those of the old OCI were established, this periodical production could be augmented by ad hoc intelligence reports or monographs more specifically targeted at, and tailored for, selected elements of the policy community. Once an NCCI were a going concern, many of these would be produced in response to specific requests; and once the original request had been satisfied, additional dissemination would be limited to those considered to be truly interested in the subject matter. None of these reports or monographs should be overly long, and their subject matter should be pertinent to the expressed or perceived interests of their respective but limited audiences.

If an array of publications like this were produced, the production of a weekly might not be necessary. The most

interested audience for the weekly has traditionally been lower level intelligence and military officers at home and abroad and as a source of handout material for liaison services. The overnight summary and a less classified version of the new daily should meet these needs.

Keeping in Step with the March of Technology: An NCCI would have no more and no less difficulty coping with, or taking advantage of, technological change than have any of the past or present entities established to produce current intelligence. The major immediate effect, as indicated in earlier sections, would be the heavy costs of replicating existing facilities should an NCCI be established at a new location. To this would be added the costs of new equipment as it comes on line in the Intelligence Community.

Some of the more visionary intelligence managers and producers are already taking the position that people working together on common problems need not be physically colocated. With the means of communication already operational and with those that can be expected in the next few years, they argue that close cooperation and interaction in the production of intelligence can be accomplished among people who are far apart so long as their working environments contain compatible equipment.

In theory there may be something to this argument, and it may become more persuasive in the future. But at the

present state of the art--particularly as it concerns the real life operation of these systems--integrated current intelligence production still requires close and continuous dialogue on the part of those doing the drafting. Coordination by means of electronic communication is of course being done every day, but the actual drafting of items is another question.

Indeed, even were long-distance collaborative drafting eventually to become technically feasible, there still would be a strong argument for bringing NCCI staffers together under one roof. As we have said in other contexts, one of the strongest arguments for an NCCI is the synergistic effect of having people from different agencies and representing different disciplines working together in the same office on common intelligence problems for extended periods of time.

CAN A STRONG CASE BE MADE FOR AN NCCI?

Throughout the course of this study, both in our interviews and in our own reflections on the subject, an underlying issue has been: do we really need an NCCI? What would be the gains of organizing the Intelligence Community in this fashion to produce national current intelligence? Would these gains come anywhere near compensating the Community for the bureaucratic disruption and actual budgetary outlays that establishment of an NCCI would involve?

It has been easy enough to put our finger on the many problems and complexities inherent in the idea. It has been much more difficult to find strong, practical arguments for

an NCCI or to discern at this particular juncture in the evolution of our foreign intelligence structure any significant pressure for an attempt to organize an NCCI.

As noted in the introduction, under the President's dispensation of last February, CIA has clearly been given the responsibility for producing national intelligence. To improve its ability to help carry out that mission, the Directorate of Intelligence is in the process of reorganization, while DIA is going its own (legitimate) departmental way, expanding the NMCC and bringing it into closer symbiosis with the NMIC.

An NCCI's time thus does not appear to have come.

A set of circumstances could arise, however, under which the NCCI might be worth a closer look. As suggested earlier, it might be decided after all to make two people out of the DCI, with CIA being placed under separate command and its role reduced to that of a collection agency and with the DCI authorized to organize an office of intelligence and analysis whose mission would be the production of national intelligence of all types.

In view of the major upheaval that such a reorganization would entail, the difficulties and costs of establishing an NCCI would not loom so large, since they would tend to be submerged in the welter of the larger complexities of the overall revampment of the Intelligence Community.

But even under these circumstances, formation of an NCCI would not be easy, and a balancing of the tradeoffs might still

suggest that it would not be worth the effort. In any event, it would require serious study in light of the concrete conditions in which its creation was to take place.

An Interim Proposal: In the meantime, the Directorate of Intelligence could negotiate with other agencies for a limited exchange of personnel for rotational assignments. Those coming to CIA presumably would in the main help staff the new Current Reporting Group, but some might go to the research and analysis offices. For the reasons enumerated in this paper, the potential for this kind of exchange is probably limited, and swaps would have to be negotiated on a case by case basis. But it might be worth trying, both in terms of its intrinsic merits and as an experimental start toward determining whether an NCCI would be feasible or worthwhile.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

--With sufficient impetus from on high, an NCCI could be organized, but--under current circumstances at least--at costs in terms of bureaucratic disruption and actual budgetary outlays that would exceed by a considerable margin the theoretical advantages to be derived from such a center.

--Aside from the added costs, the principal obstacle to establishment of an NCCI would be the extreme difficulties participating agencies would have in diverting qualified personnel from essential departmental duties.

--Given the personnel constraints and other problems that would attend establishment of an NCCI, it seems likely that, rather than

be better, its product would be inferior to that now produced largely by CIA and coordinated by the other agencies.

--There is not at this point strong pressure from any quarter to embark on such a venture as establishment of an NCCI. In fact the other agencies appear relatively content to allow CIA to take the lead in producing national level current intelligence.

--Should there be a major revampment of the Intelligence Community at some later date, it might be worth taking a closer look at the NCCI concept. Even then, it should be given serious and detailed study in light of the concrete circumstances then obtaining.

--In the meantime, the Directorate of Intelligence might negotiate limited exchanges of personnel with a view toward obtaining the direct participation of analysts from other agencies in the production of national current intelligence.

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